THE

WILD HUNTSMAN'S CHASE.

FROM THE GERMAN OF BÜRGER,

AUTHOR OF LENORE.

London:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY

SAMPSON LOW, BERWICK STREET, SOHO:

SOLD ALSO BY

R. FAULDER, AND E. BOOKER, NEW BOND STREET.

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THE following Translation appeared in one of the public prints on the 26th of October, 1796. A few weeks after an elegant version of this Ballad, which had been advertised about the same time, was given to the Public by another hand, under the title of THE CHASE.

THE subject of this Ballad is a popular legend credited in some parts of Germany. The Cottager relates, that, in the days of Charlemagne, the Wild-Grave, or Earl Warden of the Chase, heedless of the mischief he occasioned, or of the profanation of the Sunday, pursued his sports at all seasons of the year. At length, after repeated warnings, he was overtaken by the vengeance of Heaven, and punished in the manner here detailed. When the tempest, howling through the wide and gloomy forests of Germany, threatens the hut of the affrighted Woodman with destruction, he often attributes it to the passage of the Wild Huntsman.

THE

WILD HUNTSMAN'S CHASE.

"HALLOO! on horse, on foot, away!"
Shrill sounds the haughty Wildgrave's horn;
High rears his steed, brooks no delay,
And pawing snuffs the gales of morn.
They're off!—The hounds loud op'ning cluster round,
With voices, whips, and horns, the hills resound.

Gilt by the Sunday's morning ray,
His Castle's stately tow'rs appear'd;
The chimes and bells announce the day
Of pray'r and rest: and distant heard
Are sounds of holy song, the pious lays
Of grateful mortals to their Maker's praise.

Straight thro' the church-yard's sacred shade,
Th' impetuous Earl, ne'er heeding wrong,
Dashing o'er graves but newly made,
With whoop and hollow mars their song:
When sudden on his left a blood-red Knight,
Another clad in silver join'd his right.

Say who these Knights? What doth them bring?
The deep design the Muse may guess.
Blooming the one, and mild as spring,
His looks internal peace confess:
The other dark, and of deportment proud,
Whose eyes flash'd lightning as from thunder cloud.

" Welcome! Well met! — No other place,
" Not Heav'n itself affords such joys;"
(The Wildgrave cried) " The noble Chase
" Surpasses all. — Hark forwards, boys!
" Away!" — Rising, he swang his cap around,
With voice and hand then cheer'd each fav'rite hound.

" Ill suits the horn with holy lay,"
The fair Knight spake, in manner mild:
" Return:—No good you'll reap this day,
" Your angel warns."—With looks most wild,
The other sternly cried, " Hunt on, my Lord;
" Act like a Prince—heed not that sniv'ller's word."

" Well said! my neighbour on the left,
" Thou art a hero to my mind:
" Let those of gen'rous soul bereft
" With canting monks remain behind."
" Yes, pious Sir! whether it hurt or please,
" Happen what may, this day I'll hunt at ease."

Field in and out, hill up and down,
Still rushing forward on they fly;
O'er verdant lawns, o'er moors so brown,
The Rival Knights still follow nigh.
See! from yon brake a milk-white Hart they rouse;
Mark well his size, observe his branching brows.

And louder still his horn he blew,
And speedier still both horse and hound,
With wild uproar, pursuing flew:
Some headlong dash'd, bleed on the ground.—
" Go! hurl to Hell! why should it me annoy?
" Enow remain:—my pleasure I'll enjoy."

Now prostrate in the rip'ning corn
The panting Stag his form conceals;
But vain his wiles, his hopes forlorn,
The steamy scent his haunt reveals.—
Kneeling the toil-worn Lab'rer cried, " Forbear!
" Our dear-bought earnings, Earl, in mercy spare."

The gentle Knight now forward bears,
And offers counsel mild and good;
But the left man derides his fears,
And fires him on to deeds of blood.
With scorn the gen'rous dictates he declines,
And in the left man's toils himself entwines.

"Begone!" (he roar'd) "thou cursed clown!"—
(At him his fiery steed he rears)—
"I swear my hounds shall hunt thee down,
"If still thy clamours din my ears.
"My words to prove—'Ho! Comrades, come along!
"Sound well your whips, and let him feel the thong."

He said, 'twas done.—With desp'rate bound,
O'er fence he flies, and close behind,
With action eager, horse and hound
Streaming pursue.—Like wintry wind,—
The suite and pack dispersing, quickly spread
Wide waste.—Alas! the Lab'rer's hopes are fled!

Now by th' approaching din alarm'd,
O'er rocks and walls, o'er hill and dale,
Arous'd, close run, but yet unharm'd,
The Stag attains a flow'ry vale,
And, mingling with the peaceful herds, he tries
To shun the pack, and lose its murd'rous cries.

The staunch hounds rush through stream and flood,
Away they sweep through wood and brake,
True to the scent, and breathing blood,
Nor e'er the tainted track forsake.——
Suppliant the trembling Hind the Earl address'd,
And urg'd, with lowly suit, his just request.

" Mercy, dread Lord! some pity shew;
" Reflect that in this pasture feed
" The orphan's stock, the widow's cow;——
" Await!—The Deer I'll drive with speed.—
" Spare to the poor their all, their only trust:
" In pity stay! Be merciful and just."

Again the good Knight forward bears,
And offers counsel mild and good;
But the left man derides his fears,
And fires him on to deeds of blood.
With scorn the gen'rous dictates he declines,
And in the bad Knight's toils himself entwines.

" Villain, to dare my sports delay!
" Holla! brave Dogs, have at them, Ho!"—
And ev'ry hound, in furious way,
Assail'd the flock and laid it low.—
" Vengeance and blood!" the mangled Herdsman cries;
" Vengeance and blood!" re-echoes to the skies.

Defil'd with gore, all wet with foam,
The Hart scarce clears the field of blood,
With nerves unstrung, weak, faint, and blown,
He sinking reach'd the distant wood;
Into the inmost forest shade he breaks,
And in a Hermit's cell a refuge takes.

" Give o'er," (the holy Hermit pray'd)
" Nor God's Asylum dare profane:——
" To Heav'n his creatures cry for aid,
" And think not, Earl, they cry in vain.
" Once more be warn'd by me, avert thy fate;
" Perdition waits:— Repent ere yet too late."

Once more the good Knight forward bears,
And offers counsel mild and good;
Still the left man derides his fears,
And fires him on to deeds of blood.
Alas! the gen'rous dictates he declines,
And in the bad Knight's toils himself entwines.

" Perdition here! Perdition there!
" Avaunt!" (he cried, with threat'ning tone)
" And if my Game in Heaven were,
" Thou doating fool! I'd hunt it down.
" Not thou, not God, nor aught shall me annoy,
" Spite of you all, my pleasure I'll enjoy.

" Forward, Halloo! Push on, my friends!"
He swings his whip, his horn he sounds,
When, lo! the Hermit's cell descends,
Behind him sink both men and hounds.—
In lieu of all the clamour of the Chase,
A dreadful silence, still as death, took place.

Appall'd, the Wildgrave looks around;
His whip he swings, it makes no noise;
He tries his horn, it yields no sound;
He calls, but cannot hear his voice:
His steed he strikes and spurs, in vain he strove;
Fix'd to the earth, no longer could they move.

Gloomy and dark the air appear'd,
And darker yet, till like the grave,
Whilst dismal sounds from far are heard,
Like distant sea and dashing wave:—
O'er head a blaze of light burst through the gloom,
And, thunder-like, a voice proclaim'd his doom.

" Thou Tyrant fell! of hellish mind,
" Who thus th' Almighty's pow'r defies;
" Foe to the brute and human kind!—
" Their wrongs and woes in judgment rise,
" And, dreadful! summon thee 'fore Nature's Lord,
" Where high th' Avenger wields his flaming sword!

" Fly, Monster, fly! and from this day
" Be chas'd by Hell till time is o'er,
" That thy example may dismay
" Princes and Kings for evermore,
" Who in their cruel sports for nothing care,
" And neither Creature nor Creator spare."

Aghast the wretch pale shudd'ring stood,
Slow beats his heart, scarce heaves his breast,
And icy horrors freeze his blood,
Blue vapours all the grove invest;
Before him roar bleak blasts of chilling wind,
Whilst driving sleet invades him from behind.

Now round him sparks and flashes glow,
With red and green and bluish flame;
Against him fiery billows flow,
Within which Dæmons darkling gleam*:
Lo! from the gulph a thousand hell-hounds rise,
With howl and yell, urg'd on by dismal cries.

* A more literal version would be, ' Within which imp-spawn working gleams.'

By fear impell'd, he breaks away,
And through the world loud shrieking flies;
The howling Fiends pursue their prey,
And in dire discord blend their cries.
By day they chaſe the Tyrant under ground,
At night in air you hear the hateful sound.

Such the Wild Huntsman's nightly chase,
That lasts till Judgment's awful day,
And oft on high, through airy space,
Affrights the trav'ller from his way.

THE END.

By fear impell'd, he breaks away,
And through the world loud shrieking flies;
The howling Fiends pursue their prey,
And in dire discord blend their cries.
By day they chase the Tyrant under ground,
At night in air you hear the hateful sound.

Such the Wild Huntsman's mighty chase,
That lasts till Judgment awful day,
And oft on high, through airy space,
Affrights the traveller from his way.

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THE END